

Colby Beuck

From: Jessica Gomez [jgomez@Advocacyinc.org]
Sent: Friday, February 25, 2011 7:21 PM
To: Colby Beuck
Subject: 50% va disability & social security disability
Attachments: va ratings for unemployability.doc

Hi Colby,

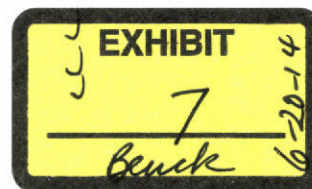
I did some research on the VA disability ratings. Since the threshold for social security disability is proving that you can't work, I looked at what the VA disability ratings were for those who are unemployable because of their disability. If you are unemployable, you automatically have a VA rating of at least 60%, possible more if you have more than one disability. I think that means that those on social security would rate at least 50% on the VA disability scale – so we are on the right track providing the exemption for those that receive ss or va benefits. However, this is definitely a rating used only by the military and others with disabilities won't be familiar with it, or know what their rating is. So I would suggest saying you that you meet the exemption if you receive social security benefits OR have a VA disability rating of at least 50%. I'm attaching the ratings research, which I found here, halfway down the page under "General Policy in Rating" <http://www.benefits.va.gov/warms/bookc.asp>

In addition, I think we should make sure that people who are already registered to vote and are eligible for the exemption can receive a new voter registration card with an indication that they have the exemption.

I'm also a little worried that some members might have a problem with the affidavit in place of providing documentation. Have you talked with other committee members about the exemption? I have a little bit of a sense of where the opposition might come from since I talked with many members' office about the exemption this week. Call me if you'd like to discuss.

Thanks again for your work on this!

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Voter ID Disability Exemption

The disability exemption in SB 14 currently reads:

(i) An applicant who wishes to receive an exemption on the basis of disability from the requirements of Section 63.001(b) must include a certification from a physician that the person has a disability as defined by Section 21.002, Labor Code, with the person's application.

SECTION 2. Section 15.001, Election Code, is amended by adding Subsection (c) to read as follows:

(c) A certificate issued to a voter who meets the certification requirements of Section 13.002(i) must contain an indication that the voter is exempt from the requirement to present identification other than the registration certificate before being accepted for voting.

Why is the exemption needed?

- Transportation
 - Many people with disabilities do not drive, and therefore do not have driver's licenses
 - Public transportation is not available in rural areas, making it difficult to get to a DPS office to obtain photo ID
- Fixed Incomes
 - Many people with disabilities live on very low, fixed incomes, making the cost of obtaining supporting documents (such as a birth certificate) prohibitive
- Institutional Residents
 - Many people with disabilities live in institutional settings, where it is often unnecessary to have a photo ID and is difficult to obtain one
- Physical Immobility
 - Some people have severe physical disabilities that confine them to their homes or relatives' homes
- Low Voter Turnout
 - People with disabilities are already less likely to vote because of perceived barriers

Problems with the current exemption:

- Some members have expressed confusion about the exemption, the definition of disability, and who would be eligible to receive the exemption.
- Obtaining a physician's certification of disability can be difficult and potentially costly.